

Minutes

York County School Division

Gifted Education Advisory Committee

Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at York High School

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting began with GEAC members and visitors introducing themselves and their current roles in the gifted and education communities. We welcomed our new Director of Elementary Instruction, Dr. David Reitz.

Committee and Consulting Members in Attendance:

Lindsey Cook – Coventry Elementary School, Chairperson
Meg Storey – Dare Elementary
Leanne Seguin – Grafton Bethel Elementary School
Miki Fett – Magruder Elementary School
Vanna Upchurch – Mt. Vernon Elementary
Lindsey Leach – Seaford Elementary School
Alison Phillips – Tabb Elementary School
Andrew Duggan – Yorktown Elementary School
Jessica Diebler – Grafton Middle School
Margaret Harned – Queens Lake Middle School
Beth Brauner – Yorktown Middle School
Sarah Wilmoth for Stacie Lohr – Bruton High School
Elizabeth Hass – Grafton High School
Danielle Way – Tabb High School
Sarah Haywood – Gifted Education Coordinator, EXTEND
Kristin Spires, EXTEND
Christina Head, Associate Director K-12 Academic Services, School Board Office
Angela Seiders, Director of Secondary Education, School Board Office
David Reitz, Director of Elementary Instruction, School Board Office

Visitors in Attendance:

William Taft
Steve Gonzales
Sarah Wilmoth
Sudha Deenadyalan
Kyung Murphy

II. Overview/Tour of YHS Learning Commons

After the introductions and before moving into this section of the meeting, Margaret Harned asked Dr. Reitz about his view on gifted education. Dr. Reitz stated that he wants our school division to do what is best for our children; specifically how do we challenge them, make sure we understand them, and always try to foster their fire for learning. He gave an example of a classroom experience he had with a gifted student. In addition he talked about professional development for teachers so that they are better able to look at each student in a diverse classroom of learners. This included understanding cultural equity, keeping an open mind to all different types of students, and finding out why they are all unique.

Sarah Haywood shared a presentation with information from Dr. Karen Cagle and Heather Steinmiller, the YHS media specialist, about the new Learning Commons space at York High School (YHS). The slides contrasted the new

space with a traditional media center. The space at YHS opened this fall after initial planning, site visits, appraisals and student and staff forums last school year. The school division has plans to create similar spaces at all YCSD high schools with Bruton next in line followed by Grafton and Tabb. A parent asked if the students will be surveyed again to see how the newly implemented spaces are viewed. Christina Head said she was sure that was the case but would check with Dr. Cagle. We took a 5 minute self-guided tour of the space.

III. Parent Comments

Sarah Haywood spoke briefly about the format for this portion of our meetings. Specifically she mentioned it was for general questions/comments and not specific to one particular situation. Parents are always welcome to submit questions and comments through their school representative as well as attend GEAC meetings.

A parent asked what progress the Delivery Service Model Committee had made. Christina Head was on the agenda to give an update later in the meeting but answered the question, gave an update and answered subsequent questions during this portion of the meeting. The notes are in section IV below.

A parent asked a question about the school division's relationship with the Governor School for Science and Technology (GSST). There have been some instances where communication regarding bus schedules have affected students who attend. Both Sarah Haywood and Kristin Spires work with GSST to coordinate and communicate program information sessions and application processes to both the program and the pre admission series program.

IV. Gifted Service Delivery Model Update

Christina Head provided an update on the activity and progress of the Gifted Service Delivery Model Committee. The committee has met three times to date. The pace of the committee has been slowed down and will meet more times than initially planned to facilitate a more informed decision-making process with consideration of the many factors that are involved in modifying the current delivery model. The October meeting was to introduce the background. The group spent time generating questions regarding our 5 year local plan and took questions. In November the team sorted the questions/ideas into three categories – directly related to work of the committee, somewhat related and nice to know. They also moved the questions around until they had a final poster of directly related questions. Website links to other gifted education programs were also disseminated. Before the January meeting, the GEAC chair and vice chair met with both Ms. Head and Dr. Reitz. In January when the committee met, Sarah Haywood answered 5 of a set of 15 questions from the work done at the previous meetings. Her thorough answers were helpful to understanding gifted education in York County including how that fits into the broader context. Then the committee reviewed 5 school systems in our area (Newport News, Suffolk, Gloucester, Williamsburg/James City County, and York County) and took notes of what they liked. Based on this information and after the meeting, administrators picked the top three school systems to do site visits. The ones chosen were Newport News, Williamsburg/James City County and York County. This coming Thursday will be a visit to Dare Elementary and the EXTEND Center. Dr. Reitz mentioned the site visits will be conducted by a well-rounded team of about 10 individuals so we can evaluate through different lenses. The team will then share the results of the visit. The team will also continue to do more research and Sarah Haywood will answer another 5 questions from the earlier meeting set. Later this spring there will be a model analysis exercise.

Margaret Harned asked for a restatement of the purpose and objective of the committee. Ms. Head responded that it is to determine how we can best meet the needs of our gifted students. Mrs. Harned also asked if there was anything "wrong" with our current model and what prompted the review. Ms. Head mentioned that it had been 20 years since our program evaluation had been done and that there were many models out there to review and an interest in looking at ours.

Miki Fett asked if the representative to the Delivery Service Model committee was supposed to send out information to his/her parents. It was noted that it was acceptable to send out information. In addition notes from Lindsey Cook who represents GEAC could also be distributed. Mrs. Fett also asked when and how comments and questions could be made to her committee representative.

A parent also asked if the committee was providing the superintendent with information for the budget. Christina Head said that it will not for this coming budget as the committee will still be doing its work. Dr. Reitz stated there would be no change to this year's budget from this committee.

Another question was raised in regards to the gifted program housed at Waller Mill this year. Christina Head said it would also be looked at during the model review. In addition, a parent asked if a program evaluation specifically for Waller Mill and Magruder students would be done this year since they have had a change in location from previous years. Jessica Diebler asked if the annual parent and student survey would be a good way to get that data. Vanna Upchurch asked if we could drill down into the survey data to get that information. We may need a separate question or survey for those students and families in those schools.

Liz Hass mentioned that she had direct knowledge of the gifted program delivery model in one of the school systems the committee will be visiting. She will be sharing her personal experience with how the program her children attended was designed as well as actually implemented.

Beth Brauner asked how were the school districts to visit chosen and why we were not looking at Virginia Beach (VB). Christina Head stated that the size of the VB program was much larger and it also had significantly more funding. The gifted program there includes a full-time school, Old Donation School. Dr. Reitz (who had been in VB for 14 years) reiterated that we were looking at programs closer to our size. A follow-up question was asked if it made sense to look at the program size as a percentage of student body. Sarah Haywood mentioned that school systems vary in thresholds for giftedness and some have tiered programs so that can bring some inconsistency in the numbers. It was also suggested that we look at programs outside of our area rather than limiting ourselves to what is in our own region.

Dr. Reitz acknowledged that it is a small step when looking at the models of other programs. In addition, the committee may only see a snapshot and not a thorough everyday experience. Finally, although it would be great to talk to students, it was added that will probably not happen during this part of the process.

V. Secretary's Report – Danielle Way

The committee electronically approved the minutes from the October 22, 2019 meeting on November 26, 2019. Comments and changes during the approval process were much appreciated.

VI. Gifted Education Update – Sarah Haywood

New students were identified at the end of November 2019, they began pullout services at the beginning of December 2019, and the gifted education staff held a parent orientation meeting for those families.

A parent/student information session for New Horizons Governor's School for Science and Technology was held in December 2019. This was led by its director, Vikki Wismer, and Kristin Spires, the secondary gifted resource teacher. Several hundred people were in attendance. The deadline for applications for academic year New Horizons Governor's School is approaching on February 12. If you know a 10th grade gifted student who would be a good candidate for Governor's School, please encourage him/her to contact his/her school counselor immediately and to visit <http://nhrec.org/gsst/admissions/how-to-apply/>!

The results of the second whole-grade NNAT screening for first graders were recently returned, and all students who scored in the 95th percentile and higher were then referred for full evaluation. Because of that, referral numbers for this last trimester are high, at over 250 students, and further testing is taking place (last week and this week). Gifted resource teachers assisted gifted contacts with the testing at the schools last week, and no pullout classes were held.

The deadline for kindergarten referrals is at the end of this week. Identified students will participate in 6 seminars throughout the fourth quarter. This is a change from years past- typically there have been 8 sessions. The number changed due to providing services at WMES. The gifted resource teacher for the primary grades doesn't have the weekly half-day built in her weekly schedule for these seminars or for working with teachers in the schools. This

year's K seminar schedule was built around days when students have SOL testing (and students impacted by that testing remain at their home schools) and gifted resource teachers can cover 1st and 2nd grade pullout classes at the Center. There will be a separate parent orientation for parents of new kindergarten students in March.

This coming Thursday, the elementary gifted resource teachers welcome the Gifted Program Model Committee as representatives from this group visit the EXTEND Center for observations of classes. There have been several administrators who have visited so far this year, and it's been good to have YCSD leaders see for themselves what instruction "looks like" at the Center.

The gifted staff is continuing to pilot an online referral system created by our IT department. This has been requested by the gifted contacts to help reduce the amount of paperwork needed for referrals; however, at this time it seems it is creating even more work on the administrative end for a variety of reasons. We currently have 3 elementary schools and one middle school using this system, with the plan to implement it Division-wide next year.

The selection committee for Governor's school summer residential programs will soon meet to review applications and select nominees for these summer opportunities. Kristin Spires, our secondary gifted resource teacher, worked with high school counselors to identify around 15 high school students from 3 schools who wanted assistance with their applications for these summer programs, and staff also provided testing for two who needed updated standardized test scores.

There is still time to register for The William and Mary's Center for Gifted Education annual "Focusing on the Future" event that will take place on Saturday, February 1. Registration information can be found here: <https://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/precollegiate/future/index.php> The W&M Center for Gifted Ed. is also sponsoring a 2E conference on February 28 and 29. There is a "one day rate" and one of those dates is a Saturday. More information is available here: <https://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/profdev/conferences/2e/index.php>

At the beginning of March, there will be a 2nd professional development session for gifted resource teachers as they work to develop a curriculum framework with the pullout units taught in EXTEND classes. Barbara Kennedy, a retired Virginia Beach City Public Schools gifted coordinator, is providing this session.

Construction at the front entrance of the EXTEND Center continues as an enclosed breezeway/hallway is made for the EXTEND Center's neighbor, Dare Elementary. The original completion date has been delayed, and it will be much later this spring before this project is finished.

Two final updates: During the last meeting Sarah referenced the annual regional parent advisory meeting that would be held in February. This event will be postponed this year and will recur during the next school year (i.e. academic year 2020-2021).

During the last meeting, Sarah referenced updates being made to the state regulations that govern gifted services. These are still forthcoming. The Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (of which Sarah is vice president) is finalizing recommendations that will be sent to the VDOE and published mid-March. It would be good to be familiar with current regulations so that GEAC, as a group, can respond to the suggested changes. Regulations can be found here: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/gifted_regulations.pdf

OM Update: Teams are preparing for the regional tournament, which will be held on March 21 at Churchland High School in Portsmouth. There is always a need for volunteers to assist that day. Please let Leeza Beazlie, who works with the OM teams, know if you are interested.

Elizabeth Hass asked Sarah for clarification on the review and commenting on state regulation changes. Sarah Haywood explained the regulators put more weight into group comments first, but anyone can comment anytime, once they are published mid-March.

VII. Old Business

The idea for a speaker for Parents of Gifted Students was discussed. The topic of 2E (Twice Exceptional) students was deemed too narrow. Request for ideas and target audience (elementary or secondary) was solicited. We typically alternate age groups each year. A suggestion about putting the question out via parent emails was made. Dr. Reitz suggested a talk about the value of Maker Spaces and what they involve. Another parent mentioned the topic of Competition and Anxiety among high school students. Angie Seiders suggested Dr. Jennifer Cross as a speaker.

Lindsey Cook brought up the subject of the community member vacancy on the GEAC. We have not had a member for quite some time and we need to decide what to do with the position. There was a discussion on the purpose or role of the member as well as a review of the types of individuals considered to fill the position. In the past, the member was filled by a parent whose children had aged out of the school system but who thought it was important to still be involved. Consideration had been given to individuals such as a military liaison, underrepresented organization member, university employee, current student, previous student, or an individual with a connection to industry and business in our area. Danielle Way suggested we eliminate the position based on past experience with difficulty in finding an advocate that fits the role. Liz Hass motioned we remove the community member requirement from the GEAC by-laws. Jessica Diebler seconded that motion.

Beth Brauner asked where we stood on fundraising ability. Christina Head stated that Stacie Lohr has a "draft" of the guidelines for booster club and a phone number to call anytime with questions, such as details regarding 501(c)(3) status. She said that the CFO was 98% ready to go with distributing the requirements and just needed a couple of inputs from principals. The finished guidelines will hopefully be distributed by the end of the school year.

VIII. New Business

Lindsey Cook proposed a change to the by-laws to include not only sending our Gifted Education Annual Letter to the school board, but to also include a requirement to present the letter at a school board meeting. Currently there is not a designated time for this presentation and ideally we would do it at an end of summer/early fall meeting. Margaret Harned asked if we needed that idea to go in the by-laws to do this presentation. Lindsey Cook stated a reason behind including it in the by-laws was to ensure that the school board members get a personal update on the gifted education program each year. GEAC will need to determine if we can have a time spot of sufficient length on a school board meeting agenda to do the presentation.

Lindsey Cook also proposed we invite a school board member be a liaison to GEAC. We have some new school board members and building a connection with them would be one way of keeping them updated on gifted education initiatives and progress. Although we do have an open invitation for a member to attend any of the GEAC meetings, we have not had one do so in recent years.

The final two meeting dates for the 2019-2020 school year will be held at the YCSD school board office at 6:30 pm. The dates are as follows:

March 24, 2020

May 26, 2020

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Submitted by Danielle Way